

Shaping NJ Annual Full Partnership Meeting Friday, June 1

Acknowledgements

On behalf of Governor Christie, welcome to the *Shaping NJ* Annual Meeting.

I want to recognize some of the Department's staff here today that work closely on this initiative:

- Assistant Commissioner for Family Health Services Gloria Rodriguez
- Peri Nearon, Director of the Office of Nutrition & Fitness -- for organizing this event & her ongoing efforts to champion healthier living in our state.

Shaping NJ 200th partner

As you all know, the Department's key program dedicated to promoting nutrition and fitness and preventing obesity is *Shaping NJ*.

ShapingNJ is a collaborative effort of diverse stakeholders— including businesses, community-based organizations and national and state leaders—working together for policy and environmental changes that will make New Jersey a healthier place to live.

Today we welcome our 200th partner Muscle Maker Grill, a fast **healthy** food chain committed to providing healthy food options and nutritional information for all of their menu selections. This chain was founded in NJ & is now located throughout the state & in 5 other states.

You might ask—"a fast food chain?" Let me explain that Muscle Maker Grill is unique—they aim to make the healthy choice the easy choice in their restaurants by offering only whole grains, low fat meats and salad dressings and plenty of vegetables on their delicious-looking menus.

This new addition offers important diversity to the already varied partnership that is *ShapingNJ*. Our efforts to keep people healthy and curb obesity will be more successful as more businesses, like this restaurant, embrace the need to offer accessible, affordable and healthy choices to residents.

This addition to the partnership is very exciting because Muscle Maker Grill is our first restaurant in *Shaping NJ*. It makes perfect sense to bring on a restaurant as a partner—their efforts directly impact the eating habits of our residents.

Muscle Maker Grill recognizes that busy schedules sometimes have us reaching for fast food—so they worked to make healthier options of fast food.

This fits well with the partnership's mission of "making the healthy choice, the easy choice." In fact, it could double as the restaurant's slogan.

In the past obesity prevention efforts have been focused on the individual. However, education about being physically active and eating healthy is not enough. We are now working collectively on a cultural shift to ensure residents have access to recreational facilities and nutritious foods where they live, work, learn and play.

Accomplishments

Annual meetings are a good time to reflect upon accomplishments. Since the last year's meeting, we've had several exciting successes. I want to highlight some of those achievements this morning.

Baby Friendly

The Department has been promoting breastfeeding as one important way we can help build a healthier population. Research has shown that, during the first year of life, breast milk is the most nutritious food for an infant.

And infants who are breastfed for 9 months have a 30% reduced risk of being overweight. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) a baby's risk of becoming an overweight child goes down with each month of breastfeeding.

Shaping NJ recognizes that hospitals play a crucial role in increasing the initiation and duration of breastfeeding. The Department awarded grants to 10 maternity hospitals of \$10,000 each to support implementation of the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative. This initiative is a World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) program that encourages and recognizes hospitals that promote and support breastfeeding—by implementing appropriate policies, practices and staff education.

Just this year, New Jersey went from no Baby Friendly designated hospitals to 2 hospitals receiving that status.

South Jersey HealthCare Elmer was the first hospital in NJ to become Baby Friendly. One of our grantees Capital Health was the second hospital to achieve Baby Friendly status. I plan to visit both of these facilities later this month to recognize their progress.

In the fall, I convened a roundtable discussion at CentraState Medical Center in Freehold, another grantee hospital, to highlight their changes and talk with providers and patients about the importance of breastfeeding and what we can do to support new mothers. (Dr. Alicia Dermer here today was part of that panel & offered insight on the hospital's achievements)

Every hospital can make their environment more baby-friendly—for example—having newborns stay with their mothers rather than in nurseries and no longer providing formula samples as part of a new mother gift bag.

I want to thank the American Academy of Pediatrics—Pediatric Council on Research and Education for their leadership in helping our hospitals meet the Baby Friendly steps. I also want to recognize Dr. Lori Winter who has served as the initiative's champion.

This program is a model for primary prevention and will be important in fighting obesity in the next generation of our children.

Child Care Regulations

Another effort to reach young children to prevent obesity is the development of new childcare regulations with our sister agency—the Department of Children & Families—I know we have several representatives from the agency here today.

Daycare centers and schools are in a unique position to promote healthy eating and physical activity and put children on the path to a healthy future.

Since January 2010, the Department has worked closely with Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) and their child care staff in each of the 21 counties. The Department provided training and evidence-based resources on obesity prevention to agencies (CDC ARRA funding).

The Department collaborated with these agencies to conduct statewide focus groups to develop regulations that ensure that child care centers offer healthy food, opportunities for physical activity and decrease TV viewing in the center.

These regulations are finished with the review process and will be final soon.

Community Grants

The responsibility for improving access to healthy food & exercise is a shared effort and community support is essential to prevent obesity in children & adults.

Many environmental factors and policies affect physical activity and nutrition choices available to people. DHSS and other private funding partners are supporting communities through *ShapingNJ* to implement changes that improve access to healthy food and physical activity, including cultivating community gardens, helping small vendors sell healthy snacks and making it easier to walk and bike.

The Department had funding for three projects (\$45,000 total)—we successfully leveraged these dollars and attracted other funders -- the NJ Partnership for Healthy Kids, Partners for Health and Walgreens. Together we were able to support 10 communities with \$135,000 in funding. (Paterson, Warren County and Irvington, Atlantic Co, Cape May Co., Monmouth Co., Monmouth Regional Health Commission, Nutley, Montclair, and Somerset Co.)

Work included creating school wellness councils, improving the food options at bodegas, creating park trail signage, purchasing and installing community bike racks, developing community gardens, improving vending machine selections, mapping community trails, and installing new playground equipment—just to name a few.

The success of this work can be built upon by sharing promising practices with other communities for replication, and, in fact, we have been approached by local funders hoping to support this field-tested model to promote health in their communities. So stay tuned for other developments.

Events

We had many exciting events this year that were really creative, out of the box approaches to addressing the obesity challenge.

George Street Playhouse

In January, I attended the launch of George Street Playhouse's production "Austin the Unstoppable," a musical focusing on obesity and chronic disease.

This was a unique approach which used the arts to communicate the impact of obesity on every day families.

The play was a unique & entertaining way to bring the message of how important it is to make healthy choices to a broader audience.

The performance illustrated many of the problems that are leading to childhood obesity & also the lifestyle changes essential to living a healthier life. The play expressed issues in a fun, thoughtful and touching way. It showed the impact of health on the entire family--it translated something we all talk about in the abstract to a real human story.

We will see a video excerpt later today of the play.

The showcase was so successful that Horizon committed \$100,000 to make this production affordable for NJ schools, and thousands of children will be able to see this play as a result. This play is a great teaching tool for schools – it presents the problem in a way that is very relatable.

Faith-based Summit

Another new approach used this year was communicating the importance of obesity prevention through the faith-based community. As part of Minority & Multicultural Month in April the Department's Office of Nutrition and Fitness hosted a conference entitled "Health for All: Bringing Healthy Eating and Active Living to NJ's Faith Based Community."

The Faith-based Summit brought together religious leaders from all over NJ, in partnership with the Office of Minority and Multicultural Health to begin the conversation about the important role that these leaders can have in improving the health of their congregants, and their *responsibility* to do so.

As a result of this meeting, many organizations became *ShapingNJ* partners, and some will receive mini-grants from OMMH to begin the work.

Closing

These are just some of the highlights of the past year. Peri has even more exciting progress to share with you.

As you can see, our partners are very diverse in the work they accomplish every day. Together we are working to improve the lives of all New Jerseyans whether it is—

- a baby born in hospital that supports breastfeeding,
- a child in a daycare that offers healthy food & physically activity
- changing our environment to improve healthy food options & opportunities to exercise,
- or promoting healthy living through the arts or faith.

Through our partnership—we are maximizing resources that will “make the healthy choice the easy choice” for New Jersey’s residents.

I want to thank each and every partner here today for their commitment in building a healthier New Jersey.

Thank you.